

Story 1270 (1969 Tape 3)

Narrator: Mehmet Köksal

Location: Rüştü village, kaza
of Bayburt, Gümüşhane
Province

(Since the time this
tale was taped,
Bayburt became the
capital of new
Bayburt Province--
c. 1990)

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Collected by Dr. Saim Sakaoğlu

The Fox and the Miller

(I heard this story that I shall tell you more than ten years ago from Kâmil Selçuk, the muhtar¹ of our village. The story is called the "The Fox and the Miller.")

One day a very hungry fox approached a miller and said to him, "If you will feed me, I shall see to it that you are married to the daughter of the padişah." Although the miller did not at first believe that the fox could accomplish such a thing, he was finally persuaded by several things that the fox said. He therefore decided to feed the fox.

As soon as his hunger was satisfied, the fox set out the palace of the padişah. When he was shown into the presence

¹The muhtar is the elected head of a village or urban mahalle (ward). He is sometimes the only elected official seen by villagers, for most civil officials in rural Turkey are appointees of the Ministry of Interior or some other fed-

of the ruler, the fox said, "My padişah, I have come to ask the hand of your daughter in marriage, by the will of Allah, to Tak-Tak Pasha."²

The padişah replied, "Before I can grant or deny this request, I must see Tak-Tak Pasha."

"Very well, Your Majesty. I shall bring him here."

The fox ran back to the mill and asked the miller to accompany him to the palace to meet the padişah. The miller refused at first to go with him, saying, "How could I appear before the padişah while I am wearing such shabby clothes?"

"Leave that to me," said the fox. "I shall arrange to provide you with suitable clothes to wear in the presence of the padişah." After some further discussion of the matter,

miller was convinced that the fox would indeed secure better clothes for him, and so the two started walking toward the

palace. Shortly before they would have arrived at the palace, the fox said to the miller, "Wait here a few minutes for me. I shall go to the palace and return for you."

eral department.

²Today the word pasha means simply a military general. In earlier times it often referred to the military governor of a large area. The name Tak-Tak undercuts the importance of the title, for Tak-Tak is onomatopoeia for the sound of knocking on a door.

Leaving the miller behind, the fox proceeded on to the palace alone and reported to the padişah. He said, "Your Majesty, on his way to the palace to meet you, Tak-Tak Pasha was attacked by bandits and robbed of all of his money and clothing. Can you give me a suit of clothes suitable for such a great man? If you will do so, I shall take them to him at once so that he can come to your presence without further delay."

The padişah complied with this request, and the fox took the clothes to the miller. Shortly afterwards, the miller met the padişah. As the two men talked, the ruler noticed that his guest was looking this way and that way as he scrutinized everything before him in the palace. The padişah said privately to the fox, "Your Tak-Tak Pasha has probably never seen such luxurious furnishings as I have here in the palace."

Always clever, the fox responded, "My padişah, Tak-Tak Pasha is probably just trying to determine if you can afford furnishings of the kind he has in his own mansion."

The discussion now turned to the marriage proposal. As usual, the fox did most of the talking for his master. After he and the padişah had agreed upon the terms of the marriage,

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they decided to hold the wedding not at the palace but at Tak-Tak Pasha's mansion. As a result, a few days later a long procession left the palace bound for the mansion of Tak-Tak Pasha.

As the procession moved along slowly, however, the fox frequently ran ahead of it to make the necessary arrangements. At one point he advanced to a large flock of sheep pastured along their route. He said to the shepherd, "If the crowd following me asks you who owns this flock of sheep, be sure to say that it belongs to Tak-Tak Pasha. If you do not say that, they will probably kill you!"

When the padişah himself came up alongside the flock, he asked the shepherd, "Who is it that owns this large flock of sheep?"

"This flock belongs to Tak-Tak Pasha," answered the shepherd.

When they reached a large herd of cattle a short way farther along, they were told, "This herd of cattle belongs to Tak-Tak Pasha." A short while later they came to a herd of water buffaloes, and again they were told, "These animals belong to Tak-Tak Pasha." This had all been arranged, of course, by the fox.

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The padişah was astonished at what he heard. "It is remarkable," he said, "that there should be such a rich person in my country without my even knowing about him!"

The procession moved along and moved along until it finally reached what the fox announced was the mansion of Tak-Tak Pasha. It had actually been the residence of a family of giants, but the fox had persuaded them to leave the building. Arriving at their mansion before the rest of the procession, the fox had pointed to the huge crowd behind him and then announced to the giants, "The padişah is leading that huge army here to destroy you!"

"What can we do to save ourselves?" the giants asked.

"There is only one way for you to escape now, and that is to hide in the well before the front door of your house." Gathering all of the giants together, he directed them, one by one, to descend into the well.

By the time that the padişah and his followers reached the mansion, the giants were all out of sight in the well. Gesturing to the crowd of people to come to the well, the fox addressed them. "This is a sacred well. Each of you should throw a stone into this well for good luck." It was a very large crowd of people, and by the time each of them had thrown

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in a stone, the well was packed with rocks almost to the ground level. The giants at the bottom of the well were, of course, all killed, and after the wedding ceremony was completed, the miller and his wife occupied their mansion.

Bearing the name Tak-Tak Pasha, the miller married the daughter of the padişah, and became a very wealthy man. The padişah gave his daughter a very expensive dowry, and he presented his new son-in-law with extensive property. The young couple lived very comfortably in their mansion.

One day several months later, the fox asked Tak-Tak Pasha, "What are you ever going to do for me in exchange for my helping you achieve such great success? What, for example, would you do to honor me if I should die?

To the latter question Tak-Tak Pasha answered in this way: "If you were to die, I should have a golden memorial coffin made in your honor and have you in it suspended in prominence from the ceiling of the great hall of my mansion."

The fox wondered how sincere the miller was in what he had said. A few days later he decided to test the miller, so he pretended to die. When the miller saw the fox lying motionless on the floor, he grabbed the fox by its tail and threw the body out on a heap of trash

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Jumping up, the fox said, "Oh, Tak-Tak Pasha, is this the way to treat a friend? You said that when I died, you would have me suspended from the ceiling of the great hall of the mansion in a golden coffin. Shame on you!"

The miller was greatly embarrassed at having been caught in such deception. He made what apologies he could, and he an oath to honor the fox at the time of his death.

It was not long afterwards that the fox really did die, Tak-Tak Pasha suspected that the fox was again testing sincerity. This time, he really had a golden coffin made, he had the body of the fox suspended in it from the ceiling of the great hall. In this way the fox received the honor that was due to him.